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AN EPISTLE,
CONTAINING
A WORD OF EXHORTATION,
COUNSEL AND WARNING,
TO FRIENDS,
AND
SUCH AS MAKE A PROFESSION OF THE TRUTH.
BY
DAVID HESTON.

PHILADELPHIA:
WM. S. YOUNG, PRINTER, REAR OF 52 NORTH SIXTH STREET.
1859.

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AN EPISTLE TO FRIENDS, &c.

It pleased the Lord, after a long and dark night of Apostasy, to gather, as from the wilderness, a dispersed and scattered seed, who were earnestly asking the way to Zion, with faces turned thitherward, and to give many to behold in the visions of Gospel light, the mysteries of the kingdom of Anti-Christ, with her cunningly devised and enticing imagery, wherewith the Mother of harlots wrought out her many enchantments, to draw men aside from following the right way of the Lord; and these, by the help of the Lord's Holy Spirit, were enabled to withstand and overcome her in all her deceitful transformations, whereby she was and is ever seeking to deceive the hearts of the simple, and make men drunk with the secret abominations of her cup. And as these were faithful in following the clear manifestations of Divine Truth, and the gentle leadings and pointings of the unerring finger of Israel's Shepherd.

they were made instrumental both in gathering together into one, the children of God who were scattered abroad, and in discovering to many the true and living way, which the penetrating eye of human wisdom and reasoning is utterly unable to unfold. And thus by degrees "primitive Christianity" came to be revived and upheld in a large degree of its ancient purity and excellence.

But as Mystery Babylon, (the false church,) is ever seeking to gain an entrance, and to set up her kingdom in the hearts of the Lord's children; not satisfied with the multitude of her votaries, whom she had made an easy prey, and "bewitched with the wine of her sorceries;" she very early gained an entrance, and turned aside the hearts of some after other gods, till by this means, *and the introduction of mere birth-right members into the church* before they had been brought under "the flaming sword which turns every way to keep the way of the tree of Life," the beauty and lustre which shone so conspicuously at the first rise of our Society, began by degrees to grow dim; and as the spiritual vision of many became clouded, the beautifully painted and life-like, (though dead and formal,) imagery of Mystery Babylon came more and more to find acceptance within our borders; and as the "son of perdition" came to be worshipped in his most refined transformations, he began "to oppose and exalt himself," in many, above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, and as God

to sit in the temple of God, even in the heart, "*showing himself that he is God.*"

Oh! sad and lamentable condition, which many were brought into, and which at this day has so greatly overspread us; and yet how few there are who behold it in this night and falling away, which has so sorrowfully overtaken us as a people, because that through the abundance of her delicacies, which this false church, this Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots, hath so artfully presented to view, many who were once highly favored under the heavenly anointing, have been drawn aside and enticed thereby to sip of her golden cup, till at last they have been made drunk with the wine of her sorceries, and can no longer discover her lewdness, whereby she works in a hidden mystery to draw aside and ensnare the unwary. Oh, read this, thou that *canst!* But many I am persuaded will deride and lightly esteem it, as they also do the poor weak instrument that hath penned it; men and women who would be willing to be considered great and honorable in the eyes of the men of this world, and at the same time have a name to live, while, alas, they are dead! These my soul doth truly mourn over and pity, who have been betrayed into the territories of darkness, and prevailed upon to worship the beast and his image, and to receive his mark in their foreheads, that they may buy and sell; for without his mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name, none could traffic in his merchan-

dise. Now mark what saith the Scripture concerning it: "Here is wisdom. Let him that *hath understanding* count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six-hundred threescore and six." Rev. xiii. 18.

And thou Zion-ward traveller, who art groaning to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, thy secret mourning and travail of spirit hath reached even unto the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; wherefore be not dismayed nor cast down because of these things, nor be tempted to turn aside in the hour when the combined powers of darkness may seem to be let loose to try thee; for though he may be permitted to cause thee a hard struggle, the Lord's furnace is still in Jerusalem, and he graciously designs, if thou wouldst be his devoted servant and follower, to disentangle thee from everything that would let and hinder thee in thy heavenward journey. Wherefore faint not, I beseech thee, at the tribulations and besetments which abound, for sorrow endureth but for the *night season*, and those who are enabled to endure that revolution of seasons which constitute the Lord's year, will bring forth the fruits of each, and witness their joy in Him to flow, in the breaking forth of the morning light; which will, in its due and appointed time, shine upon them, to give them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

True it is, that the church seems much gone into the wilderness; yet I verily believe, that the Lord

hath a travailing seed in some places, that will not be permitted to fall there, nor be utterly deterred from coming forth therefrom, though in a seemingly weak and scattered condition, if their eye be kept single to their heavenly Captain and Leader, who stands waiting to help them. The Lord cannot behold iniquity in Jacob nor transgression in Israel, with allowance or approbation; yet many seem willing to screen and cherish it, while making a high profession of religion; which is a covering, under which much spiritual wickedness finds shelter. The world may be said to be well nigh filled with religion, (so called,) though in an almost endless variety of forms, which seems to be reaching out far and wide, to gather all of every hue under her broad extended wing: for Mystery Babylon (the false church) has indeed been busily engaged in rearing a specious building, having room for all, that she may well be called a "great city," having many streets, both narrow and wide, in great variety; that all may find such as will suit, and habitations in abundance, artfully contrived, and adapted to meet the views of all.

Isaac Penington in speaking thereof, says:—"This city was built, (and is daily built,) *in imitation of Zion*; painted *just like Zion*. The intent of it was (and still is,) to *eat out Zion*; to *suppress Zion*; to *withdraw from the truth by a false image*, and to keep her inhabitants in peace and satisfaction, under the

belief and hope that it is the *true* Zion; and, therefore, it must needs be made *like* Zion, else it could in no way suit their ends. Every street must be like the streets of Zion; every house like the houses of Zion; every tribe and family like the tribes and families of Zion; the worship like the worship of Zion; the faith like the faith of Zion; the painted Christ like the Christ of Zion; all that go for truths like the truths of Zion: they would not deceive else; City Babylon would soon be *seen through* else, and become quickly desolate and forsaken, did she not lay her paint on very thick, and with great art and skill. Now, here is the wisdom, here is the *true eye tried*, to see through all the paints of this city, *in all* the shapes and forms of it; to turn from *every* street, *every* house, *every* chamber, *every* image and false appearance of truth, which this spirit forms from the letter, *every* duty that it thus calls for, *every* promise of Scripture which it endeavours to apply to that to which it belongs not, that it may *lull* the soul asleep, and cozen and deceive it of the thing promised; here, I say, is the *true eye tried*, to turn from all this, and wait for the rising and redeeming of the true seed of Zion, and for the springing up of the true life and power in it and from it; for as long as this spirit *can* deceive you with any likeness, *ye shall never know the truth*, nor come to the worship of the true and living God, which alone is in the Spirit and in the truth."

“The end of all this—of Satan’s building up this city, this *great* city, (thus accurately in the power of deceit, and in the very likeness of Zion,) was, and is, *that it might be taken for Zion, and be worshipped there as God, and that without jealousy or suspicion.*”

Well, it matters not *what we profess*, nor how inward, how spiritual, how pure our profession may be, still the enemy enters to deceive; for he not only “walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” but, when needs be, is “transformed into an angel of light,” that he might deceive, were it possible, the very elect.

He has long been seeking to overthrow, or rather to undermine Quakerism, so as to deprive it of its *vitality*, and has tried various ways to effect his purpose. The introduction of new views, suited to the tastes and desires which he had raised up in very many, both in this country and also in England, proved very successful. But, though he worked here in a mystery too, yet to many the mark of the beast, and the number of his name, were plainly distinguishable; and when he could no longer deceive in this way, he sought to hide his workings more securely from view, under a *profession* of sound Quaker doctrines; and though, like “a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” he adapts himself to suit the circumstances, so that if it were possible, he might deceive all; yet his covering is too short, and the eye that is truly anointed with the eye-salve of the king-

dom, can still behold the subtle workings of this spirit, which declares himself to be "a Jew" when he is not, but is of the "synagogue of Satan;" yea, of Anti-Christ's church still. And though many seemed to discover and withstand him in these appearances for a time, yet by *degrees*, his artfully painted and enticing life-like imagery began to find place, till a lukewarm condition overtook them, and they became somewhat like the Church of Laodicea, "neither cold nor hot," though still in the profession, in the form and very *appearance* of truth; but without zeal, without life, and without power.

We may remember what is said of the church that fell into this condition, though she still maintained the form and appearance of all these, how that she esteemed herself to be "rich and full, and *increased* in goods, and had need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17, a condition very easy and comfortable, and very pleasing to the man's part, which seems quite well satisfied when it can say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; *take thine ease*, eat, drink, and be merry." But this condition of the church was, and still is, very loathsome to God; for though she *seemed* to have *all*, she had indeed *lost* all, and stood in need of the "gold," the "raiment," and the "eye-salve" of the kingdom; being in truth wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

Now, as this condition comes in any wise to *prevail*

in a church, will there not be a gradual falling away from the doctrines and testimonies of truth? And, by giving way to seducing spirits, will there not also be, *in process of time, an embracing of the doctrines of devils?* Oh, that these things were but more deeply, more seriously considered! For I am persuaded, that many who feel at times warmly desirous of being found among the flock of Christ's companions, are already wandering in the regions of uncertainty, though perhaps as yet they have not entered beyond the outskirts or suburbs of the territories of darkness and deceit.

Oh! be entreated to pause, and in abasedness of soul wait *patiently* for the fresh arising of the light of Zion's King, which never deceives, to discover to thee, with *holy certainty*, the most subtle working of the prince of darkness; for though the way he may be pointing out to thee as "the King's highway" of holiness, may appear to be a way full of *charity and love*, and *promise to lead thee to a land of love and light*, and to gather thee more and more as into the very bosom of the church of God; yet great is the mystery of iniquity, as well as of godliness; and those only who do truly abide in the light, life, and power of truth, can discover it, especially in its most deeply *refined transformations*. And these as they stand and abide firm in the unchangeable truth, which is ever the same, though *all* men should forsake it, cannot compromise or make bargains with any thing which is out of it, under what-

ever pretence, however *seemingly* propitious, but have power to withstand it and testify against it; for, as saith R. Barclay,—“ If this be denied, *farewell* to *all* Christianity, and to maintaining sound doctrine in the church of Christ.”

I know, and can testify from heartfelt experience, that the grand seducer is very busy in raising up many seemingly sore discouragements, and is seeking to convince, as by “ signs ” and lying “ wonders,” Matt. xxiv. 24, that his *is* the way of truth, and none other; for, having this power given to him for a season, he has not been slow in rearing up stumbling-blocks in the way of Zion’s children; which many stumble at, while others, like the mournful prophet, are ready to exclaim:—“ Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left *alone*, and they *seek my life!*”

Thus, not the earth only is being shaken, but the *heavens* also. But the *wo* is still unto them that “ decree unrighteous decrees, and write grievousness which they have prescribed.” For though they may say,—“ By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent, and I *have removed the bounds of the people;*” yet shall not “ the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness?”—and under his glory, shall he not, in his own time, kindle a burning like the burning of a fire, and the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy

One for a flame?"—and shall it not "come to pass in that day, that the *remnant* of Israel, and such as are *escaped* of the house of Jacob, shall *no more stay upon him that smote them*, but stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel in truth," and "return, *even the remnant of Jacob unto the mighty God?*"

And happy will it be for those who hold fast the beginning of their confidence and faith, without wavering, firm unto the end, and keep their garments undefiled; for, as it was with the "few names left in Sardis," they that are worthy shall walk with Him in white; for, having come out of *great tribulation*, and washed their robes in his blood, they shall have right to the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and to enter through the gates into that city, "which needeth not the light of the sun nor the light of the moon," nor any thing that was or is created, "to lighten it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" for thy walls round about thee shall be "salvation, and thy gates praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my

planting, the work of mine hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time." Isaiah lx. 18—22.



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